

BOARD OF REGENTS FOR ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

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**WORK SESSION**

**Thursday, October 21, 2010  
11:30 – 1:30 p.m.**

The Rhode Island Department of Education – Shepard Building  
5<sup>th</sup> Floor – Peter McWalters Conference Room  
255 Westminster St. – Providence, RI 02903  
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Minutes

Attending: R. Flanders, A. Beretta, B. Shimberg, A. Davis, C. Callahan

Convene: 11:35 a.m.

Commissioner's Comments

School for the Deaf Update - Commissioner Gist reminded the members of the Board that in July, the Board of Regents released governing authority for the Rhode Island School for the Deaf back to the Board of Trustees. Subsequently, RIDE staff have continued to work closely with the board and building administrators. Last week RIDE was notified that the Director was taking a temporary leave of absence. In the intervening days, RIDE has had several meetings and daily contact with the school. She told the Board that the Department has placed a temporary *state-assigned acting Director* (Mary Caporelli) to ensure smooth day-to-day operations and support to the school and the board until they are able to identify a longer-term solution. Ms. Caporelli is a member of the RIDE Transformation Office with substantial administrative experience. She started working at RISD on Monday and will continue on a part time basis for approximately one month, during which time RIDE will continue to support the school and board to identify an interim director that will be appointed through the formal board approval process. RIDE's decision to temporarily place a part-time administrator at the school has been carefully communicated to the Board of Trustees. It is not part of any formal intervention, but rather, an extension of RIDE's continued support to RISD.

Commissioner's District Visits - The Commissioner announced to the Board that she has again begun the process of scheduling visits to schools. Each visit will consist of three components - time in one classroom to see first hand some of the great teaching and learning going on in the schools; a meeting with teachers from the district to discuss educator evaluations and other issues; and a community forum that the superintendent and school committee will cosponsor. Some of the district visits will coincide with the Board's monthly meetings in the field.

2011 Revised Budget and 2012 Budget Review

This is the last review session on the budget prior to the Board of Regent's meeting on November 4th. She reminded the Regents that at the last Board meeting, they received a list of recommended reductions to be included in the FY 2011 revised and FY 2012 budget proposals that will achieve 2% and 11% in savings respectively when compared to the FY 2011 enacted budget. Additionally, the department has an opportunity to request additional resources in FY 2012 that would provide adequate

funding levels for “optimum” program operations. Next, the Commissioner highlighted sections of the budget as outlined in the budget package (attached). She reviewed the list of initiatives that are organized around three funding strategies, all developed with the RIDE leadership team and aligned with the department’s strategic plan. The first request will be included in the general revenue budget and will restore previous reductions and allow for new resources to ensure adequate resourcing to meet the demands of current programs. The second proposal will request a technology bond to support LEA infrastructure needs to improve the capacity and infrastructure behind local data systems; and finally, because Round 2 of Race to the Top capped RI’s funding at \$75M, there is \$51M less of professional development funding available to support our educators. The department will be seeking private funding from several foundations to support professional development initiatives.

Commissioner Gist then spoke to the Regents about the biggest change in the FY 2012 budget - the new funding formula. RIDE staff, Carolyn Dias and Kristen Cole updated the Regents on the implementation of the funding formula.

Review of Providence School Construction Project

The Commissioner reminded the Regents that they are responsible for reviewing and certifying Necessity of School Construction projects for district owned schools reimbursed through Housing Aid. The projects being presented are various Providence School Construction projects related to the ARRA Qualified School Construction Bond and the Qualified Zone Academy Bonds. This year Providence was allocated \$12,283,314 for QSCB and \$9,666,000 for QZAB by the Board of Regents. Providence has submitted an application for approximately \$50 Million per year for the next 5 years. Initially, these projects were slated for consideration for the November agenda, but were postponed due to a late application submission. However, the city has requested Regents approval for only the work related to ARRA bonds to take advantage of the current bonding market.

The Providence ARRA projects before the Board include district wide capital improvements totaling \$21,949,314. These improvements are primarily classified as “warm safe and dry” type projects, which includes lighting and heating plant retrofits, fire protection and alarm system improvements, envelope repairs and science laboratory upgrades.

The approval of the projects will be brought back for Regents approval at the November 4th meeting.

Review of High School Graduation Requirements

Andrea Castaneda gave the Regents an update on their deliberations concerning the High School Graduation Requirements. Ms. Castaneda reviewed the decision points made at the work session on the high school regulations held on October 19. The Regents discussed the concept of the “two diploma” system and if Regents diplomas could be awarded by non-approved districts. They also discussed an appeals process, the student proficiency requirement and possible alternatives to the state assessments, and a “point-based” system. The discussion of the high school graduation requirements will continue at the Regents October 25 work session.

Update on Lowest Achieving Schools

Commissioner Gist asked RIDE staff member, Jennifer Smith to give the Regents an update on the Lowest Achieving Schools. Ms. Smith reported as follows:

- IN CENTRAL FALLS, school reform plan revisions have been received;
- Initial revisions to the budget have been received, and a preliminary allocation of approximately \$550,000 has been made.
- From recent reports and observations the quality of instruction remains the largest hindrance to success at the high school.
- Non-instructional issues draw attention away from pedagogy and teaching. Specific examples: teacher absenteeism – 224 absences between 9/1 and 10/8, (in cases where there are excessive absences) teachers choosing not to provide coverage for students, and most significantly, accusations of significant student misconduct “anonymously” reported to local media. This is extremely concerning. Visits and observations at the school do not reveal that students are out of control, demonstrating threatening behavior or overly aggressive to one another, or to staff. Weekly visits from Transformation Office staff do not evidence a rationale for the excessive number of discipline referrals.

Review of Charter School Proposal

The Commissioner reported that at the September 14 Board of Regents work session, draft revisions and updates to the charter school accountability protocols were presented to the Regents and from that discussion, several questions from members of the Board were noted and those were answered and discussed at the October 7 Board meeting.

Also on October 7th RIDE staff presented the Regents with a power point presentation which reviewed the proposed revisions, including recommendations from the Department’s Legal Department.

Update on Teach for America

Commissioner Gist asked RIDE staff member, Lisa Foehr to speak with the Regents about Teach for America. She reported as follows:

- 27 individuals are currently seeking RI certification through TFA (TNTP partnership);
- 2 are not yet placed;
- 10 are Secondary Special Educator/Sec Content;
- 7 are Elementary;
- 5 are Secondary English (some with ESL);
- 4 Secondary Math;
- 1 Science.
- 17 have been placed in Providence schools;
- 4 in Democracy Prep.;
- 2 at Trinity Arts;
- 1 at Segue;
- 1 in Newport.

Review of English Language Competency Test

The Commissioner commented on the issue that all Rhode Island teachers must be able to read, write, and speak the English language with sufficient competency to allow them to teach effectively and to prepare their students for success. She said that through meetings with parent groups and conversations with district leaders, RIDE has learned that there may be teachers in our public schools who cannot communicate well in English. She told the Board that RIDE does not have information as to the extent of the problem statewide nor of how many districts may have hired teachers who cannot speak English; however, even one is too many. Therefore, to ensure that all educators can communicate in English, RIDE has drafted regulations to specify that competency in English is a requirement for certification to teach in Rhode Island. RIDE will immediately suspend certification of teachers found to be not competent in English. Under these proposed regulations, school leaders will observe educators and prospective educators for competency in English. If competency in English is in doubt, a process of determination will begin. This process of determination will involve observation of instruction by two trained evaluators. If both evaluators raise concerns about the teacher's competence in English, the teacher will have the opportunity to take an examination of competency. This issue was first presented at the Board of Regents September 2nd meeting and the Board requested more information about the process and the test that will be used to assess educators whose ability to communicate effectively in English is in question. RIDE staff member, Lisa Foehr spoke to the Board about the proposed Regulations and the protocols that will be implemented to insure that educators receive fair and equitable treatment. The approval of this item will be brought before the Board for consideration on November 4th.

Review of CTE Regulations

The Commissioner reported to the Board that RIDE has continued to work on the development of the CTE regulations. The first step included the endorsement of a series of principles, which the Board acted upon in September. Since then, RIDE has initiated the next step in the process, including:

- A review of the recently submitted UCOA data to begin a rigorous fiscal analysis of the various costs associated with administering CTE programs of student across the state;
- Collection of regulatory and statutory language from other states with rich and successful CTE programs, and;
- Scheduling regional outreach sessions with superintendents, building principals, and center directors to discuss the pending changes to the CTE regulations and their role in enabling the creation of multiple pathways.
- Bringing updates to the BOR on the regulations as a draft progresses.

She said that although this important work has already begun, the Department is falling slightly behind its original schedule due to a number of other demands including RTTT, the review of the secondary regulations, and the release of the first round of statewide UCOA data. However, despite these delays, we are going to attempt to stick with our proposed schedule, which will have new regulations promulgated by mid spring.

The Meeting Adjourned at 1:40 p.m.